Visiting Olympia

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Every year on the Tuesday before my birthday (in January), at the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, I go down to Olympia. This is called the March for Life and it is a pro-life advocacy event. Leaving Bellingham at 6 in the morning, I take a bus full of other advocates, and we drive down to St. Martin’s College. There, we prepare ourselves for the day by celebrating the Mass for Life with Archbishop Sartain of the Seattle Archdiocese and about a thousand Catholics. During the homily, the Archbishop discusses the importance of speaking out against abortion, the death penalty, euthanasia, and all other offenses against life. He then encourages us to, while at the capitol buildings, seek out and talk with our representatives across the state of Washington.

Once mass is over, we march toward the rally, which is held between the Legislative Building and the Temple of Justice. And, then, representatives come up to a podium one by one. They are both Democrat and Republican, religious and atheist—but all of them share one ideal—they want to end abortion and protect taxpayer’s money from going toward an act that one might consider unethical.

This year, I heard several men speak about surviving a failed abortion, a post-abortive woman that grew up with a mother that treated abortion like a trip to the grocery store, and a representative that, until last year, had still strongly supported abortion until he had fallen ill with terminal cancer and had a change of heart. Each year we hear amazingly impactful personal accounts from our representatives and this year was no different. After the major speeches are done, representatives come up to speak one at a time and explain different policies, laws, and regulations that either support or destroy pro-life values. Often, the representative also includes their own story about why they are pro-life. This is usually where I start to “fan girl”, because two of the three of my representatives back home (and my representatives in Whatcom County) attend this event every year. This year was no different. And, unlike last year, I had enough time to track down my representatives assistant after the rally (my representatives were rushed to a meeting and I had to leave soon), where I scribbled a “thank you” note, was given a sheet with *all* my pro-life representatives on it, and encouraged to email them with my comments and concerns.

The minute I returned to Bellingham, email is what I did. I spoke out against HB 2148, which would mandate abortion coverage in health insurance plans which offer maternity care, as well as showed my support for SSB6126/2SHB 1285, which will provide attorneys for foster children and youth so that they will have their voices heard in court—possibly for the first time. Two of my representatives, Elizabeth Scott and Dan Kristiansen, responded to my opposition and showed that they sided with me. With the second bill, Dan Kristiansen once again showed his support, as well as Senator Kirk Pearson.

Before going to the March for Life, I’d never understood how easy it was to get my voice heard. Nor did I comprehend how much support I had in the capitol for the one thing I am most passionate about—defending the dignity and sanctity of life. Whether it be for the sick and the elderly, the incarcerated, the victims of war, for humans growing in and outside of the womb. It’s a wonderful feeling to know I am not alone in my desires for the world and for my surrounding community.

Moving forward, toward graduation, I will continue to utilize these opportunities to connect with my representatives. Whether they always agree with me or not, I have come to understand the vital importance of creating and maintaining connections. These connections can change the world. *I can change the world*.